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TIMES EDITORIALS

Misgivings About Spy Exchanges

Allen W. Dulles approved the most famous of spy trades with Russia, the one in which the United States got U-2 pilot Francis Gary Powers back in exchange for the Soviet "master spy" Col. Rudolph Abel.

But the former head of the Central Intelligence Agency hesitates to say that because a little of something is good, more is better. The general idea of spy swapping causes him "some concern," and he is not the first to be troubled.

In our kind of society a suspected spy gets a fair trial in which the evidence is carefully appraised. He cannot be convicted, for example, on wire-tapping evidence. But in Russia, as Dulles said, there is always the danger

that the police will "arrest innocent American travelers and throw them in jail."

The conclusion is obvious: we send a Russian spy to prison after a fair trial, whereupon the Soviet police pick up an American traveler who has probably never carried espionage farther than kibitzing in a card game, and offer him for exchange.

Most Americans will want to get their incarcerated fellow citizen back by any deal that seems honorable, and who will criticize them?

Still, the practice means that Soviet spies convicted in the United States go to prisons with revolving doors. Mr. Dulles posed the problem but offered no solution.

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